FACT SHEET

USAID Supports World Press Freedom

The U.S. Government through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supports journalist and broadcasters around the world as they strive to provide objective news and information to citizens in their own countries and elsewhere. In order to further the development of free and independent media systems in developing nations, USAID assistance focuses on four basic areas:

- Training to raise the professional level of journalists, editors, and other media production personnel
- Business management to enable media organizations to become economically viable
- Government reforms to create a legal environment where independent media is protected and can thrive
- Industry partnerships to strengthen the voice of the media as they advocate for their members and the public's interest

USAID's independent media programs have helped more than 50 countries improve freedom of the press in their communities and their nations. Some examples of these efforts include:

Community Radio

Community radio plays a vital role in keeping citizens informed, mobilizing community action, and informing local governments of community needs. USAID continues to be in the forefront of supporting significant expansions of community radio in places such as Haiti, Mali, Tajikistan, Sudan, Guinea, and Afghanistan.

In Haiti, for example, USAID provided extensive equipment, production, training, and association-building support to build a network of 40 community radio stations, expanding the footprint of community radio coverage from 36% to 65% of all citizens (85% of citizens when urban for-profit radio is included). Many rural areas received radio service for the first time.

Support for Independent Media in Iraq

For the last four years, USAID/Iraq provided funding to the America's Development Foundation and to the International Research and Exchanges Board for training journalists, editors, media technicians, sales and marketing managers, and other personnel needed by the newly emerging

FACT SHEET

non-state media sector. USAID programs also provided needed market research, equipment, grants for specialty reporting, and provided funding and training for a new independent news agency.

Information Without Borders

Since 1995, USAID has worked in Central Asia to improve the quality of journalism and the capacity of media to manage themselves effectively as businesses. In addition to extensive training programs, support is provided to local journalists to produce public interest television programming. One such program is *Open Asia*, a regional weekly TV news magazine program. *Open Asia* and a wide variety of other locally produced programs can now be viewed across Central Asia in five local languages through the USAID-supported Central Asia Republics Satellite TV project.

Public Media

In the Kyrgyz Republic, USAID provides support to Kyrgyzstan's Media Commissioner Institute, which promotes the rights of independent mass media, provides legal assistance to the growing mass media in the country, and supports the process of transforming state TV into a true public service broadcaster.

Internet Access

In Asia, USAID has provided funding for the Global Internet Policy Initiative, which works for an open and democratic Internet in Vietnam, India, Indonesia, and Afghanistan. This effort involves advising on draft legislation and establishing an independent stakeholder group that engages government and the private sector in dialogue on key policy issues through round tables and open forums.

Investigative Journalism

Since 2005, USAID/Cambodia has supported Khmer-language print journalists and editors as they gain investigative journalism training aimed at engaging the media in the fight against corruption. The program also provides scholarships to offset the high costs of pursuing in-depth stories on corruption issues and awards a prize for excellence in investigative reporting. Other training and grant programs have enabled improved investigative reporting in countries such as Paraguay, Lebanon, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

FACT SHEET

Media Sustainability Index

With USAID support, the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) was developed in 2000 to measure annual progress of developing independent media in Europe and Eurasia. In 2005, the Index was expanded to most countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and it is now in the initial stages of being extended to sub-Saharan Africa. The new MSI for Africa is a multilateral project, supported by the Canadian International Development Agency, the World Bank, and USAID. As elsewhere, MSI-Africa will help host country media professionals, the donor community, and larger publics to more precisely measure the accomplishments and areas for further development of media systems in each country.

Financial Independence

In Azerbaijan, USAID helped to improve the impoverished state of local television broadcasters by distributing and installing transmitters at stations throughout the country. An improved broadcast signal enables stations to reach a larger audience, increasing their potential advertising revenue. Increased revenue brings broadcasters closer to financial independence, which in turn provides for greater editorial independence.

Conflict Mitigation

In Kosovo, USAID support has helped train local media to reduce inflammatory reporting, establish professional standards, and include more coverage of minority issues.

In Mali, USAID support to establish a community radio has developed bonds between communities with long-standing conflicts.

USAID will continue to support those individuals who are committed to freedom of the press and looks forward to the day when independence throughout the media can be found worldwide. For more information on USAID democracy programs, please visit www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance.

# # #